

ETA CARINAE - an image in visible light taken by the Hubble Space Telescope.

Eta Carinae may be the biggest and brightest star in our galaxy. With a hundred times the mass and five million times the brightness of our Sun, Eta Carinae will live a very short, turbulent life. As you touch the image, you can feel two huge billowing lobes of gas and dust - at two and eight o'clock - expanding in opposite directions from the central star. Each lobe is bigger than an entire solar system and represents the latest eruption from Eta Carinae. During its lifetime of a few million years, Eta Carinae will eject over half its mass into space.

ETA CARINAE – an image in combined X-Ray and visible light, taken by the Chandra X-Ray Observatory and the Hubble Space Telescope.

This image is zoomed out from the visible image. Move your finger to the center of the image and touch the same double lobe structure that you felt in the visible image, which is now much smaller. Move out (left, right and top) to touch a horseshoe shaped loop surrounding the visible Eta Carinae lobes. This loop marks the brightest X-ray emission, where material ejected from Eta Carinae has crashed into clouds of gas surrounding the star, compressing and heating the gas to millions of degrees. The X-ray image tells us about earlier eruptions from Eta Carinae.

Tactile key



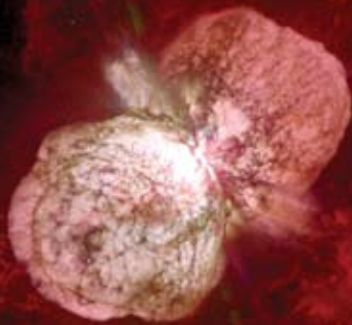
Central star in shroud



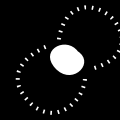
Surrounding hot gas



Expanding lobes of gas



Tactile key



Central star and lobes of gas



Winds of hot gas



Adapted from the book Touch the Invisible Sky published by Ozone Publishing Corp. www.ozonepublishing.net